

Update

institute

Issue 5
August 2004

THE
CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD

The Christian Institute

FREE!

'Sex change' Bill:

Government admits new laws may be a problem for churches

'Gay marriage' Bill:

Plans to give gay couples all the rights and privileges of marriage

Hull University Christian Union:

We help defend a CU that has been threatened because it has a Christians-only leadership policy

Gambling laws:

Government plans sweeping deregulation of the gambling industry

Gagging Christians:
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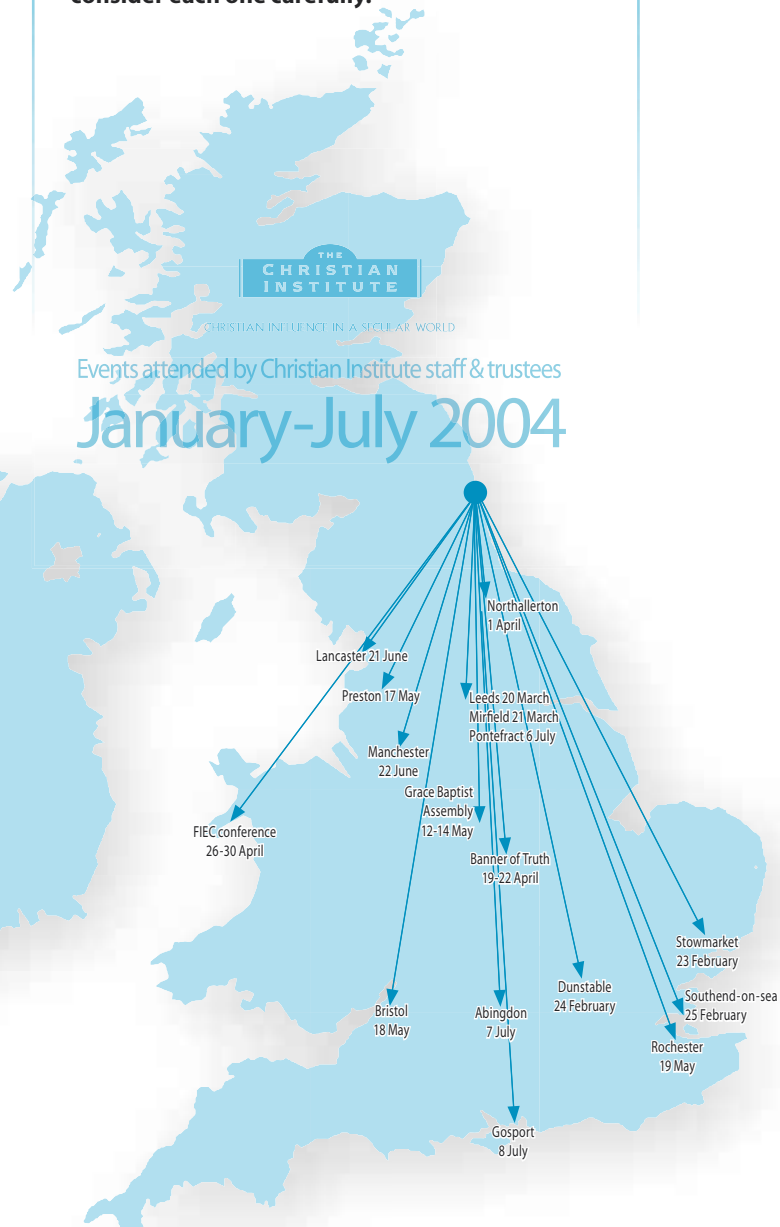
Sex shop defeated

Britain's top sex shop company is beaten by 75-year-old campaigner ...p8

Around the nation

Staff and trustees from The Christian Institute have continued to travel around the nation holding meetings about our work. These meetings give supporters an opportunity to meet staff members and learn more about our work and our campaigns. For people who are unfamiliar with the Institute, the meetings serve as a good introduction. We work hard to make our meetings professional, encouraging and informative.

If you would like The Christian Institute to visit your area, please get in touch. We cannot guarantee to accept every invitation, but we will consider each one carefully.



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Evangelicals are not like Osama Bin Laden

The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, wants to create an offence of inciting religious hatred in England and Wales. Under the guise of protecting freedom of religion, this proposal could actually severely restrict it. Would it become a criminal offence to seek to persuade a Muslim to become a Christian? Would the Rev Ian Paisley be permitted to say that the Pope is the Anti-Christ? Could the Lesbian and Gay Humanist Association seek to argue that staff of the Christian Institute are inciting hatred of humanists by arguing that practising homosexuality is wrong? Perhaps the Attorney General is the only person who knows the answers to these questions. Three years ago under David Blunkett's original plans the Attorney General was to be given power to decide what constitutes "legitimate belief". The proposal carried a maximum seven-year prison sentence. No wonder that the House of Lords defeated it then. Now the Government is to have another attempt.

Ironically as the Government was trumpeting its proposal as protecting religious believers, the Home Secretary's intemperate remarks show the very dangers of the plans for Christian beliefs. In a speech to re-launch the proposals David Blunkett argued that society needed protection from "those who would take our lives because they reject our faith" and went on "...[the new law] applies equally from far right evangelical Christians, to extremists in the Islamic faith."

The Home Secretary is equating evangelicals with Islamic terrorists who want to kill those who do not share their faith. This is outrageous! Evangelicals are not like Osama Bin Laden. Evangelicals have the same beliefs as William Wilberforce, Lord Shaftesbury or Josephine Butler who did so much to improve the lives of the downtrodden and the underprivileged. No evangelical group in the UK seeks to kill those with whom it disagrees. At the very least the Home Secretary should have issued an apology. Instead the phrase was quietly dropped from the written transcript on the Home Office website. But it was too late. Thousands of people had seen the video broadcast on the news.

Can we have confidence that the courts would resolutely protect religious liberty if there was an incitement offence? Just consider what has already happened when the courts and the police adjudicate on religious belief in the name of 'gay rights'. In 2002 a mild-mannered autistic pensioner, Harry Hammond, was convicted of "harassing" gay rights protestors just for holding up a sign against homosexual immorality. In 2003 the Bishop of Chester was criticised by the Police for saying that homosexuals should change their orientation.

A new incitement offence could drastically limit evangelism and freedom of speech in this country. The Home Secretary may not

particularly like evangelicals. If he wants to believe that we are as harmless as doves or as dangerous as terrorists he can do so. What he cannot do, yet, is adjudicate on what constitutes "legitimate belief". We can thank God for this.

Extract from the speech given by David Blunkett on 7 July 2004:

"We need to be able to take on those extremists and say, I'm afraid in our society, pluralism and openness, the ability to accept differences without being subsumed, is crucial to our survival, it's what distinguishes all of us, from every faith, from those who would take our lives because they reject our faith, and it applies equally from far right evangelical Christians, to extremists in the Islamic faith."

Many supporters may not have known The Rt Hon Michael Alison (1926 – 2004) who died recently. He was a superb example of a Christian who was salt and light in public life. He will be greatly missed. He used his position as an evangelical MP to argue for the Christian case across a large number of issues: Sunday trading, abortion, pornography, Christian teaching in schools and religious broadcasting. His work on these last two issues saw major changes to the law and brought him into contact over many years with myself, and John Burn and David Holloway (trustees of The Christian Institute). When he retired as an MP he could no longer raise issues directly in Parliament but instead wrote to his own MP. This he did with great regularity. It is right that his work for Christ is remembered.

Parliament can do anything but make a man a woman, and a woman a man." Those are the words of the 2nd Earl of Pembroke (1534-1601). Evidently our present Parliament begs to disagree. It has assumed the power of God Himself who determines our sex at conception. Under the new Gender Recognition Act 2004 a man can become a woman in law and then go on to marry another man. All of the three main political parties backed the extraordinary legislation. However at every stage of the Bill it was opposed by Christians. The long campaign has been a great witness to the truth and it has had a measure of success (You can read about this on page 4 of the Update). In this and many other areas we must pray and act to protect religious freedom.



Colin Hart, Director



Government promises exemptions for church ministers from £5,000 'disclosure' offence 'Sex change' Bill: Government announces partial exemptions to protect church leaders

Peers almost win protection for churches

■ By Mike Judge

A narrow escape for the Government in the Lords is likely to have influenced its decision to give church leaders some protection from the 'disclosure' offence in the Gender Recognition Bill.

A vote to protect churches was narrowly defeated in the House of Lords in February.

Peers voted by 149 to 144 against an amendment tabled by Christian Peer, Lady O'Cathain. The amendment would have given religious bodies the same level of protection given by the Government to sporting bodies.

Three Church of England Bishops (Manchester, Newcastle, Worcester) voted against the amendment and one Bishop (Winchester) spoke against it before abstaining. If the Bishops had voted with Lady O'Cathain, the amendment protecting churches would have been won.

The Government was determined to defeat the amendment. Given this determination, it is extremely impressive to have so nearly won. This was in no small part due to the letters written by Christians on this issue.

It demonstrates the importance of persistence. It is so important that Christians continue to make a strong stand, even if the results are not immediately clear.

■ By Simon Calvert

The Government has partially backed down over plans to criminalise church leaders who 'disclose' the true sex of a transsexual. But the Government refused to give churches protection from other effects of new transsexual rights laws. The new laws create a pretext for transsexuals to sue churches.

The House of Commons held its final debate on the Gender Recognition Bill on 25 May. The Government promised to use new legal powers in the Bill to exempt church leaders from the 'disclosure' offence. It will now not be an offence for church leaders to disclose that a person has had a 'sex-change' where disclosure is for the purposes of membership, employment or marriage within a church. Without the exceptions, such actions would have been subject to a criminal fine of up to £5,000.

There is no doubt that the letters written by Christian Institute supporters, together with

supporters' meetings with MPs, put pressure on the Government to back down.

But other aspects of the Bill put religious liberty at risk. Edward Leigh MP led a cross-party attempt to amend the Bill to help protect religious groups from being sued by transsexuals. Labour MPs were required to vote against his amendment and it was defeated by 104 votes to 296.

Edward Leigh put the case for protecting churches very well. There was clearly a feeling in the

House that his amendment was very reasonable. If the Government had allowed its MPs a free vote like the other parties, the result would have been different.

In a letter to The Christian Institute from the Lord Chancellor, the Government has sought to place 'on the record' its belief that legal actions against churches *should* fail. These statements will be of some assistance to churches that are sued under the Bill. Ministerial statements can influence how courts apply the law in practice.



Our briefings on the Gender Recognition Bill

Expert legal opinion confirms threat to churches



James Dingemans QC

Eminent barrister, James Dingemans QC, has produced a legal opinion confirming that the Gender Recognition Bill puts religious liberty at risk.

The Bill originally criminalised a church leader who disclosed the birth sex of a transsexual to another church leader. Dingemans said this infringed church freedoms: "Their ability to project their message about beliefs in relation to transsexualism would be effectively removed." The Government has taken this on board and will create exceptions for some of these situations (see

article above). Mr Dingemans also said the Bill "gives scope for litigation against individual churches seeking to act in accordance with their religious beliefs. Such litigation is likely to be divisive, costly and of benefit only to the lawyers." The Government says, ultimately, churches *should* win such litigation. But what if winning costs £100,000 and a trip to the Court of Appeal?

More information on this issue, including the Dingemans opinion and links to the Parliamentary debates, can be found at www.christian.org.uk

Institute volunteer celebrates her 90th birthday



By Iain Bainbridge

A volunteer of The Christian Institute recently celebrated her 90th birthday. Mrs Norah Grant from Newcastle has been one of the Institute's most faithful mailing volunteers and has assisted the Institute for several years.

When staff found out that Norah was about to celebrate her 90th birthday they organised a surprise party.

Norah came to the Institute office to help with a small mailing. She expressed delight at the opportunity to have a few hours peace from her celebrations. She had already received dozens of cards and was receiving many phone calls.

Her peace was short-lived when the mailing ended with yet another birthday celebration. This was a good opportunity for Institute staff to thank Norah and to give thanks to God for our other volunteers who serve God by helping in such a practical way.

The Christian Institute makes extensive use of volunteers to help with mailings. As the Institute's support base and mailing list has expanded rapidly (from around 400 in 1996 to over 13,000 today) it has, in recent years, used professional mailing houses. But many mailings are still done by volunteers – especially when they are urgent.

Comings and goings at the Institute

By Colin Hart

Iain Bainbridge, our Development Officer, is leaving The Christian Institute to complete his training as a solicitor in Kendal, Cumbria, with a view to practising in that town and being closer to his own and his wife's family.

Iain is known to many of our supporters. He has been on the staff for the past eight years. Many of you will have spoken to Iain on the telephone, seen or heard him in the media, or met him at conferences and local meetings throughout the UK. From *Kilroy* to the *Today* programme, Iain has boldly and clearly argued for biblical truth.

In his work in the media, speaking at meetings and with a variety of research tasks, Iain will be greatly missed. He came to the Institute in 1996 after graduating in law from Nottingham Trent

University and completing a legal practice qualification. He was an integral part of the small team that worked with the late Lady Young in the House of Lords from 1997 to defend religious liberty and to oppose the Government's gay rights legislation. Iain and his wife Hannah leave Newcastle with our prayers and thanks for his service.

Jonathan Johnson and **Christopher Somerville** will both be joining the staff as research assistants. Jonathan attends Cromer Baptist Church in Norfolk and Christopher attends Lisburn Reformed Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland. Both Churches support the work of the Institute.



Jonathan Johnson



Christopher Somerville

Building appeal going well

By Humphrey Dobson

Supporters are continuing to give generously to our building appeal. At the time of writing, the total raised had grown to £623,136. The target is £850,000. The Trustees and staff are heartened by the response and believe it is testimony to God's willingness and ability to provide for our needs.

The Christian Institute needs a bigger building to allow room for our work to grow. A larger headquarters means we can accommodate more staff. Currently negotiations with the developer are continuing about a proposed site on the edge of Newcastle upon Tyne. We look to owning our own building sometime in 2005.

In the meantime it transpired that we were not able to renew the one year lease for our temporary office at Scottish Life House. The

Lord, however, has provided alternative accommodation in the centre of Newcastle. We have now moved to temporary offices in Cathedral Buildings on Dean Street in Newcastle upon Tyne.

(It will greatly help our administration if supporters use the PO Box address for correspondence: PO Box 1, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7EF. Donations to the building appeal can also be sent to this address.)



Nearly nine in ten people support smacking

By Mike Judge

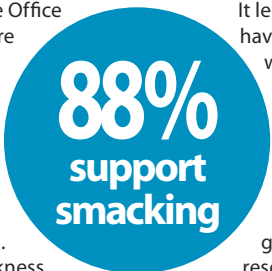
Almost nine out of ten people support smacking, according to official government figures.

The poll results were published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in 2000 and are the most reliable figures. They reveal 88% of people believe it is sometimes necessary to smack a naughty child.¹

The strong support for smacking may come as a welcome surprise to many parents, who increasingly feel as though they have to look over their shoulder when disciplining their children.

The ONS results also confirm the weakness of a recent misleading poll commissioned by the anti-smacking alliance, *Children Are Unbeatable!*

The alliance claimed that as many as 71% of people would be in favour of a ban on smacking.²



However the poll, conducted by MORI, began by telling respondents that the questions were about "family violence in Britain today". The poll then went on to ask questions about "hitting" "family members".

It led to a question which stated that children have less protection than adults and asked whether respondents would support changing the law to give children the same legal protections.

It is therefore not surprising that 71% said yes. In fact, it is surprising that the result was not higher.

Many claims made by anti-smacking groups are based on emotive, opinion-driven research. It is important that these shoddy claims are exposed.

¹ Reproduced in Annex A of 'Protecting Children, Supporting Parents', Consultation Document, Department of Health, January 2000

² MORI, February - March 2004, page 4

Lords reject total smacking ban, but support change to the law

By Simon Calvert

The House of Lords has overwhelmingly rejected calls for a total ban on smacking. Peers voted by 250 to 75 against an amendment that would have criminalised parents who smack their children.

However, the Lords did support a compromise deal between the Government and Liberal Democrat Peer, Lord Lester. Peers voted by 226 to 91 in favour of Lord Lester's amendment restricting the parental defence of "reasonable chastisement" which currently allows parents to administer moderate punishment.

Peers only supported the compromise because Government Ministers firmly maintained that ordinary

smacking would still be lawful. In theory restricting the reasonable chastisement defence should not cause problems. However, there are two areas of concern. First, the Government wants to change the prosecution policy. Second, the Lester amendment creates confusion and gives too much power to politically correct prosecutors and social workers. Some police have warned of a flood of petty allegations.

The amendment is unnecessary. Rejecting previous calls for a ban, a Government Minister confirmed that "The kind of punishment that results in injury is clearly not reasonable chastisement and as such is already against the law."¹

MPs will consider the Bill in the Autumn. Things are still at an early

stage and we will seek to do all we can to get the amendment clarified. We wish to take legal advice before making public statements on the details of the amendment.

¹ House of Lords, Hansard, 20 May 2004, col. 910

The Christian Institute has produced these briefings to help Christians understand the issues.



Easy answers to anti-smacking arguments

"Hitting people is wrong – children are people too"
"Hitting" is a deliberately emotive and misleading word. Smacking a child is not the same as hitting an adult. The motive is to help and protect the child.

"Children should have the same protection as adults"
For obvious reasons children are not allowed to drive, marry, vote or own a firearms license. No one claims 'inequality' on these issues.

"If smacking works, why do you have to keep doing it?"
This is like saying, "if education works, why do children keep going to school?"

"Smacking escalates to child abuse"
If this was true, nearly every child would eventually be abused by their parent because almost all parents smack on some occasion. It clearly doesn't lead to abuse.

"Smacking teaches children to be violent"
The majority of people were smacked themselves as children, and are now law-abiding citizens, not violent abusers.

"Sweden is an excellent example of an effective smacking ban"
Child abuse has rocketed in Sweden since the ban. Child-against-child violence has also increased. The state has taken children away from parents. Public support for smacking remains strong in Sweden. (For more information, see the 18-page booklet *Sweden's smacking ban: more harm than good* available from The Christian Institute).

More plans to deregulate gambling

■ By Jonathan Phillips

Plans for sweeping deregulation of the gambling industry are being finalised by the Government. A Gambling Bill is expected to be introduced to Parliament later this year.

The proposals, currently laid out in the Draft Gambling Bill, will dramatically change

the face of the UK gambling industry. Many vitally needed restrictions and protections are to be removed.

Proposals include repealing the 24-hour period between casino membership and play and repealing the tight restrictions on casino and betting licensing. The Government also proposes to lift the general ban on gambling advertising and create a new category of Las Vegas style 'resort' casinos offering slot machines with limitless prizes.

Research shows that gambling is harmful in any society, fuelling crime, poverty and addiction. Though the Government denies the legislation

will increase levels of problem gambling,¹ the evidence overwhelmingly shows deregulation will have precisely this effect.²

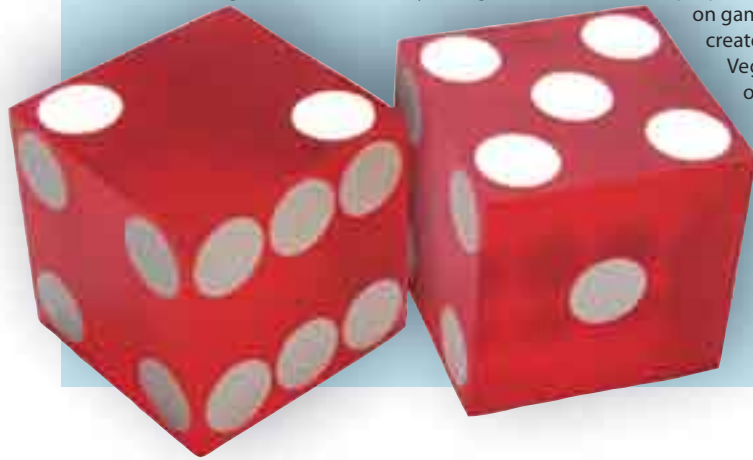
The Government's proposals represent a seismic shift in public policy. For decades, successive governments have adhered to the policy that gambling should not be encouraged.

There is no public demand for more gambling. Over 90% of people consider there are already enough gambling opportunities available.³

¹ House of Lords and House of Commons, Joint Parliamentary Committee on Draft Gambling Bill, Vol. 2, Ev 555-556, Q1693

² *Ibid*, Vol. 1, page 7

³ *Ibid*, Vol. 2, Ev 83, Submission by the Salvation Army



National Trust will host 'gay weddings'

Gay couples will be able to 'marry' in National Trust properties. The trust has agreed to five of its historic venues to be used as settings for 'gay union' ceremonies. A company called Pink Weddings is promoting the venture.

This is the latest controversial step taken by the National Trust's new Director General, Fiona Reynolds. She is the former head of Downing Street's Women's Unit. She says she wants to make the Trust less "middle-class" and "old fashioned".¹

The Trust has 3.1 million members. Any members who oppose the decision may wish to write a brief letter of objection to:

Fiona Reynolds
Director General
National Trust
36 Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AS

¹ *The Sunday Telegraph*, 28 December 2003

Lords vote to make 'gay marriage' bill fairer to families and less like marriage

■ By Simon Calvert

The Government has suffered a major defeat in the Lords over its Civil Partnership Bill. In June Peers voted by 148 to 130 for Lady O'Cathain's amendment to extend the Bill to family members who live together long-term. CI supporters who wrote to Peers helped secure this majority.

Without the amendment a daughter who gave up her job to nurse her elderly mother for 15 years would have no rights under the new law and could be faced with a crippling bill for inheritance tax. However, the survivor of a lesbian couple would be exempt.

The Bill cannot be stopped because all three main party leaders support it. Nevertheless, this victory does at least render the Bill fairer to ordinary families and makes it much less like gay marriage.

The Government claims the whole nature of the Bill has been

fundamentally changed. There will be a huge battle ahead as it seeks to overturn this amendment and to force the Lords to back down. Lady O'Cathain also argued that the Northern Ireland Assembly should have the final say over extending the Bill to the Province.



CU banned for being run by Christians

■ By Iain Bainbridge

Student chiefs at Hull University have banned a student Christian Union because it doesn't allow non-believers such as atheists to run the CU.

In January Hull University Student Union told the UCCF-affiliated Christian Union that its constitution would not be ratified unless it dropped the requirement that those leading the Christian Union must be Christians.

The CU wants to have a stall at the Fresher's Fair and be able to advertise its meetings. This has now been put in jeopardy.

The case has attracted national media interest. It raises fundamental issues of freedom of association. It is clearly ridiculous that a Christian Union cannot specify that leaders must be Christians.

This is by no means an isolated case. Other Christian Unions have experienced similar manifestations of secularist intolerance on campuses.

The CU has rightly refused to back down. It is graciously, but firmly, standing up for the rights of Christian students.

The Christian Institute has supported Hull CU throughout. The Institute put the CU in touch with Christian lawyers with expertise in religious liberty. They have advised the CU that the Student Union had acted unlawfully.

75-year-old campaigner beats Britain's top sex shop company

■ By Chris Prest

A sex shop in Preston has been refused a renewal of its licence thanks to the persistent efforts of 75-year-old Institute supporter, Frank Swarbrick.

The shop is run by the country's biggest sex shop operator, Darker Enterprises. In March the licensing committee of the local council decided not to renew the licence on grounds relating to the suitability of the location. The sex shop is seeking to overturn the decision in

the courts but will have an uphill battle.

A sex shop licence is granted for only 12 months and must come up for renewal each year. The law makes it clear that just because a licence has been granted in previous years it does not mean the council has to renew it automatically.¹ The council must look at it afresh.

Mr Swarbrick, who co-ordinated a group of objectors called the Clean up Preston Alliance, used a book published by The Christian Institute which

advises people how to campaign against licensed sex shops.

Stopping Sex Shops contains practical step-by-step advice, case studies, and the law as it relates to sex shops. Ask for *Stopping Sex Shops* at your local Christian bookshop. It is also available from the Christian Institute price £8.50 including postage and packing.

¹ R v Birmingham City Council ex parte Sheptonhurst Ltd [1990] 1 All ER 1026



'Stopping Sex Shops' contains practical step-by-step advice, case studies, and the law as it relates to sex shops. Contact The Christian Institute for a copy.

Publications from The Christian Institute

■ By Mike Judge

A new booklet on the life of J C Ryle has been published by The Christian Institute. Written by David Holloway, this short, easy-to-read booklet gives an engaging and clear-sighted overview of Ryle's life. Even those who are familiar with Ryle's works may not know the real-life sufferings and heartbreaks of the first Bishop of Liverpool.

This booklet shows how Ryle, as a young man, was plunged into shame and poverty after his father's banking business crashed; how Ryle's potential career in law and politics was then stopped before it started; and how he lost two wives to sickness. Against this dramatic backdrop, this booklet reveals the man, the minister and the

missionary. It describes the evangelical theology that he loved and based his life upon, the clarity and power with which he spoke, and his zeal to see men and women disciplined in the truth.

Other titles published by The Christian Institute include a booklet on the life of Raymond Johnston which outlines the reasons for Christian involvement in society; a how-to book on stopping sex shops; a book reviewing the research on same-sex parenting called *Children as trophies?*; and a booklet critiquing 'libertarianism'.

New titles on the moral law, the morning-after pill, contraception, interpreting scripture, and the link between marriage and health, are currently being prepared.



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